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Sent: 5/30/2012 6:55:47 PM

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Subject:

NEWS UPDATES: Industry asks Obama admin to suspend report on carcinogens (Greenwire)

Industry asks Obama admin to suspend report on carcinogens

Jeremy P. Jacobs, E&E reporter Published: Wednesday, May 30, 2012

The chemical industry has asked the Obama administration to suspend a congressionally mandated report on human carcinogens while the most recent edition's scientific methodologies are reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences.

In a <u>letter</u> for Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, American Chemistry Council (ACC) President Cal Dooley charged that significant scientific questions have been raised about the listing of formaldehyde and styrene in the agency's "<u>12th Report on Carcinogens</u>" last year.

"Reports like the ['Report on Carcinogens'] send strong signals to the American people and the marketplace and can create economic consequences, confusion and unwarranted fear when the science does not support the conclusions," Dooley wrote in a May 24 letter.

The report, released last June, lists formaldehyde, a common component in homebuilding products, as a human carcinogen and styrene, an ingredient in many plastics including food containers, as "reasonably anticipated" to cause cancer (*E&ENews PM*, June 10, 2011).

Concerns about the report have bubbled up on Capitol Hill, particularly among Republicans. Last year's \$1 trillion omnibus spending package included \$1 million for HHS to contract a National Academy of Sciences, or NAS, review of the formaldehyde and styrene listings.

However, Dooley noted that despite the passage of five months, that contract has yet to be nailed down.

Linda Birnbaum, director of the National Toxicology Program -- which administers the "Report on Carcinogens" -- said at a congressional hearing last month that the review would be under way this fall (*E&E Daily*, April 26).

Dooley urged Sebelius to "expedite this matter" and said the review will prove illustrative of broader issues with the report. Consequently, he said, the 13th edition of the report should be held up until the NAS assessment is finished.

"Moving forward with developing the 13th [report] before NAS completes its review is counterproductive because this will perpetuate long standing deficiencies in the scientific rigor of the [report's] evaluation methods and review processes," Dooley said.

The HHS report has been the subject of significant controversy. The styrene industry, in particular, has forcefully criticized the listing and has filed a lawsuit against HHS.

Public health advocates, on the other hand, have steadfastly backed HHS in the dispute. They claim that industry is seeking to indefinitely delay the agency and its scientists from doing their job. Earlier this month, a major labor union and the Environmental Defense Fund intervened in that case on behalf of HHS (*Greenwire*, May 21).

Democrats have also criticized Republicans on Capitol Hill for steps taken on behalf of the styrene industry. At a recent congressional hearing on the report, Democrats accused Republicans of being in industry's pocket (*E&E Daily*, April 26).

Click here for the letter.

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